

because they could go and buy an additional decent plan. Lower-income enrollees would be relegated to restrictive alternatives.

In other words, when the President uses choice, it is really a code word for wealth. Some choice.

Again, Medicare is a single plan that treats all beneficiaries equally and provides maximum choice and maximum access for patients and doctors. We should not allow this administration or any administration to demonize Medicare, a program that served this Nation so well; nor should we permit this administration or any administration to use prescription drug coverage as the bait to lure us in this body to privatizing Medicare for our seniors.

Medicare coverage is not old and tired. It is one of the best programs government has ever put together. It is simply incomplete without a prescription drug benefit. That is the Medicare issue.

I hope the President will abandon his privatization agenda and work with us in this body to add a real prescription drug benefit for all seniors. We do not need to fight over perceived and fabricated problems in the current Medicare program. The system is not broken. It simply needs prescription drug coverage to add to the Medicare system. We need to address the real issue.

AID FOR AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Madam Speaker, Hamid Karzai, the chairman of the interim government of Afghanistan, is in Washington, DC; and his visit reminds us of the debt that we owe to the Afghan people. It was the Afghan freedom fighters who fought the Soviet Union and defeated the Soviet Union; and it was the Afghan freedom fighters that fought with us to defeat bin Laden and the Taliban.

After the Afghan people fought and defeated the Red Army, which was in occupation of their country, something that left their beautiful country in ruins and in a shamble, we simply walked away from them in 1990. Then during the Clinton years we covertly supported the Taliban. Many of us noted that and opposed it at the time, but what appeared to be covert, or at least acquiescence, covert support or acquiescence to the Taliban continued through the Clinton administration. Many United States officials in the executive branch during the 1990s, who had no complaint about Taliban rule of Afghanistan back then, since September 11, of course, have postured themselves in a totally different way. Well, today, we have another chance.

At this time we must do what is right by the Afghan people. Any vacuum created by our unwillingness as we did in

the 1990s to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan will be filled by powers that are hostile to the United States. For example, Iran currently is pledging 50 percent more reconstruction aid than the United States. And this year only \$27 million has been scheduled to be spent on mine-clearing operations in Afghanistan. And let me add there are 8 million mines in Afghanistan. Many of them were given to the people of Afghanistan during the war against the Russians, and we did not even help them dig up the landmines that we gave them. And now we are having a paltry \$27 million being spent on clearing those landmines as hundreds of Afghan people still blow their legs off, little children, every year. And we have yet to outline a major program that will give the poverty-stricken people of Afghanistan, the farmers there, an incentive not to grow opium, which ends up as heroin on the streets of the United States.

But most important, we must assist the Afghan people in creating a stable democratic government. Let us not forget that Mr. Karzai is heading a temporary administration which ends in June. At that time, tribal leaders will determine what kind of government they will have in what they call *loya jirga*.

There is only one Afghan today who I feel, and it looks like my understanding of this having followed it for 10 to 15 years now, there is only one Afghan who has the personal prestige and credibility and, yes, the affection of his people to bring all the ethnic groups of Afghanistan together. That man is King Zahir Shah, who has offered to return in March to Afghanistan; and he has recently made it clear to me that his object in coming back to Afghanistan is to develop and to build a democratic and free government for his people.

We must not permit ourselves in haste, in our haste to extract ourselves from that region to commit the same mistakes that lead to the fanaticism and tyranny in Afghanistan in the 1990s and the loss of so many American lives in New York on September 11. We have a chance now to do what is right by the Afghan people who fought and bled in a way that certainly helped the United States in defeating the Soviet Union and bringing about a more peaceful world and prosperous United States, and in the past few months have fought side by side. They are the ones who fought with our Special Forces to defeat the Taliban and to end the reign of bin Laden and his terrorists in Afghanistan.

We owe it to do what is right by them now. I call on my colleagues to join me in seeing that we are providing the assistance needed to rebuild the country of Afghanistan so the people there can live in peace and prosper.

OPEN SOCIETY WITH SECURITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, the House and the Senate are poised this evening to receive the State of the Union Message. Unavoidably and justifiably it will be about war. I certainly hope it will also be about the continuing faltering economy. But there is an issue that probably will not be on the Presidential and congressional agenda and needs to be. It is in our face. It is very visible, but it is beneath the radar.

I will soon be introducing a bill called the Open Society With Security Act that would establish a 21-member commission. I will be inviting members in a Dear Colleague soon to co-sponsor the bill. The commission would simply look at how we can make the unprecedented accommodation between security against dangerous global terrorism on the one hand and the maintenance of an open and free society on the other. This is a truly difficult problem.

We are doing it on an ad hoc basis because we have had to. It is too serious to be left to ad hoc nonplanning, however, and we clearly do not know how to do it. Nobody knows how to do it because nobody has ever had to do it. The Presidential commission would provide a vehicle to put the best minds in this society to work on a problem that free societies have never had to confront before. We see some of the evidence before us every time we go outside this building, barricades and shut-downs; and, of course, there are on-again off-again alerts. There are all kinds of invasion of privacy that also are occurring.

We need to systematically think through these difficult and troubling problems. They were first visible here. But now they are in every part of the country because the country has been attacked and the country has responded. The country deserves some guidance from a Presidential commission. The commission, of course, would have security experts and law enforcement experts and military experts. But this is about security and democracy and freedom. So we would also have on the commission architects and city planners and historians and sociologists and engineers and artists, etc. Put them all at the table. Let them thrash it out and advise us. Security is too important in an open, free society to be left to security people.

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In the aftermath of September 11 and the anthrax scares, we can surely see that we are in danger of waking up one morning and finding that the society has closed in around us, and that we never even noticed until they closed us down.

Some of this is difficult, some of it just takes common sense, and we have already seen that when we raised our voices some of those common sense measures have been taken.

I am grateful that the White House announced just last week that it was opening White House tours to children if they left their Social Security number. Soon I hope families who leave their Social Security numbers will follow. We have seen the reopening of tours here in the Capitol, simply by having people go in the trailer to be screened first. We saw the White House lighting of the Christmas tree open simply because they moved the glass that they put around the President at the inauguration to the Christmas tree site. It is not rocket science, but it does mean somebody does have to sit down and not have a knee-jerk reaction to security without considering all the options.

In 1968, when our country faced an unprecedented racial crisis, the President had the good sense to say we do not already know it all, and so he called together the Kerner Commission. I believe that the problem posed to our free and open institutions is just as serious in 2002 as the racial crisis was in 1968. A presidential commission would bring to bear the Nation's best thinking on this unique issue and give it the thorough and rigorous investigation it deserves, with the result of advice we could take or not take. But at least we would have the satisfaction of knowing that there are people in our society who have thought about the most difficult problems in our society and given us some food for thought.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE NATION IN 2002

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Madam Speaker, the President of the United States is going to give his first official State of the Union Address. It will be the third time he has spoken before a joint session. I think the challenges facing this Nation are great.

The President certainly is going to talk about the success so far in our war against terror, but I suspect he is also going to remind us of the tremendous challenge that we have, as a Congress, as an American people, to continue this fight. We do not know how long this war is going to go on. It could be for generations. The best defense against terror in this case is a good offense to get rid of the terror cells around the world.

I think this is an excellent opportunity for this country and the rest of the free world to push as vigorously to resolve, hopefully once and for all, the conflicts in Ireland, between Palestine

and Israel, and certainly dispute between the two nuclear powers of India and Pakistan looking at Kashmir. Many things can be done.

I hope this Congress can continue to work with this President, even though this is an election year. Most people understand that in an election year the Republicans would like to regain a majority in the Senate and keep a majority in the House. Democrats would like to do what they can to retake a majority of the House and keep their majority in the Senate.

I think the challenges are also great on spending. We have already acknowledged that we are going to reach into the surpluses of the Social Security Trust Fund and spend those revenues for other government spending. We had an emergency in this country on September 11, and like any family or any business that has a serious emergency, you come up with the funds to accommodate and fix that emergency as best you can.

Those families and those businesses normally say, look, we are going to put aside less important expenditures and we are going to deal with the emergency. I hope that the President says the same thing ultimately, that, look, we now have to do a better job at prioritizing spending. We are going to deal with this emergency the way we have to. We will win the war on terrorism, but let us not drive this country deeper and deeper into debt, which means that we put our kids and our grandkids and our great-grandkids at risk in paying for the overexpenditure of this government.

Prioritizing to me means that we cut down on some of the social programs that we were so willing to expand after the Cold War, as we cut down on military, as we cut down on our intelligence community efforts, and left ourselves weaker than we should have been September 11. I think a good example in showing how much spending has grown and become the problem of us running into a deficit is our projections of 1997.

In 1998, we promised that we were going to balance the budget by 2002. At that time the projections for revenues for 2002 was a little over \$1.4 trillion, and we were going to balance the budget because we were disciplining ourselves on spending. Actually the revenues projected last week for 2002 by CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, were approximately \$1.9 trillion. So more revenues coming into the Federal Government than we thought was possible but still a deficit. Why? Because spending has increased even more than the dramatic increase in revenues in this country.

So the question is and the challenge is, will the President tonight push this Congress and the American people to start prioritizing? Can we minimize the partisan bickering and blaming as we try to come to grips with a budget that is going to be challenging, if we are to avoid jeopardizing Social Security and

Medicare and other programs by overspending, and borrowing more, and going deeper in debt?

Welfare reform I hope the President talks about because the welfare reform bill that we passed in 1996 is expiring this year. There has already been some suggestions from some of the Senators that we have to modify work provisions. I think the welfare reform bill has been extremely successful, and we have got to be very careful not to pass a bad welfare bill.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, tonight we will hear from our President on the State of the Union. I look forward to hearing his remarks, especially because he is committed to spending \$190 billion over the next decade to overhaul Medicare and provide prescription drug benefits to our elderly.

This is an important first step but, Madam Speaker, we need more and we need it now. The average Medicare beneficiary fills 18 different prescriptions in 1 year alone, yet at least one in three people in the Medicare population have no drug coverage in the course of a year and spend on average 83 percent more for their medicines than those with drug coverage.

In my own State of Rhode Island, seniors are choosing between food or health care on a daily basis. In July of last year, I commissioned a study to assess what my constituents are paying for prescription drugs. This study found that uninsured elderly pay on average 78 percent more for most prescription drugs than do seniors in foreign countries.

What is most disturbing about these numbers is that almost half of all Medicare beneficiaries with no prescription drug coverage have incomes less than 175 percent of poverty, which was \$15,000 in 2001.

The lack of prescription drug coverage for our seniors is a national crisis. Medicare+Choice, Medigap coverage, discount card programs and other accounts to chip away at this problem are not the answer. We must provide comprehensive drug coverage under Medicare and we must do it now.

Madam Speaker, I urge the President and my colleagues in both Chambers of Congress to work together to ensure that we pass this legislation this year.

SECURING OUR BORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, the events of September 11 forever changed